

do with pair formation and approximated to the 'Incitement Displays' described by Heinroth (Die Vögel mitteleuropas, Vol. III p. 163)

In September (1932) Ludlow found it common everywhere.

The Goosander. *Mergus merganser (orientalis* Gould).

Observed at Ngāyēzē, Lha Chhu (at Nyandi W. of Mt. Kailās, and on Barkha Plain), Zūnthūlpūkh. Occasional solos or pairs on lakes and streams. No sign of breeding activity.

The Great Crested Grebe. *Podiceps cristatus*.

Observed at Ngāyēzē (Mānasarowar), Ding Tso, Gyānima Tso (Khārkho).

Quite common. Nesting plentifully in June. Eggs. On a lagoon (S.W. shore of Mānasarōwar) counted 8 nests with birds brooding in an area of less than 10 acres; 40 to 50 nests in another smaller area on the E. shore of Ding Tso adjoining the breeding colony of Brown-headed Gulls. The nest is a collection of grass etc. on a floating or anchored mound of rubbish and weeds. In almost every case the sitting bird covered up the eggs with nest material before swimming away on my approach.

BIRDS NOTED IN THE MAHASU-NARKANDA-BAGHI AREA OF THE SIMLA HILLS.

BY

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A trek to Narkanda and Baghi, the latter some 50 miles further into the hills north-east of Simla, is nowadays quite popular with visitors to the Simla hills. Having had the opportunity during two successive years of making this enjoyable trip during the first fortnight of June, when on each journey detailed records of the birds seen were kept, an account of the species noted may be some value to others who visit Narkanda and Baghi just before the rains.

The list given hereafter (which is by no means comprehensive but contains, it is believed, most of the commoner birds to be seen) refers only to the area from Mahasu (8,300 feet) six miles from Simla, to Narkanda (9,100 feet) on the main Hindustan-Tibet road and along the mule track to Baghi (8,850 feet) and Kadrāla (8,900 feet) 10 and 17 miles, respectively, further east of Narkanda. From Mahasu the first stage of 6 miles to Fagu (8,200 feet) is mostly in forest; the second stage of 5 miles to Theog (7,400 feet) traverses open scree covered hillsides and cultivated tracts; coniferous forest, steep hillsides and cultivation occur on the next 11 miles to Mattiana (7,700 feet). At Mattiana which is at the head of a long valley leading to the Giri watershed more 'foothills' species seem to occur than elsewhere on the route. The 11-mile stage from Mattiana to Narkanda contains cliffs, ravines and stretches of denser forest. Between Narkanda and Baghi both the main Hindustan-Tibet road, continuing to Rampur in the Sutlej valley, and the branch path to Baghi skirt Mount Hathu through heavy pine and spruce forest with immense trees and precipitous hillsides. From Baghi to Kadrāla forest alternates with open hillsides and rocky ravines. As would be expected, therefore, a variety of tree and forest haunting birds as well as those which favour more open and cultivated hill

country may be seen. Of interest is the extent to which nominally 'plains' species such as the House Sparrow, Common Mynah and Common Pariah Kite have penetrated the Simla Hills.

An indication of the commonness of the various species in late May and early June in accordance with the frequency with which observed in the two successive years is included in the notes. Incidentally, throughout the area it was found that the best time to see and hear birds is as elsewhere, from just before sunrise until about 11.0 a.m. and after that time late in the evening.

Corvus macrorhynchos. The Jungle Crow.

Common throughout the whole area in all types of country. Seen up to 10,000 feet. Even in secluded forest tracts, one or two of these birds soon appear to investigate the intruder's food producing possibilities!

Urocissa melanocephala. The Red-billed Blue Magpie.

Fairly common en route and common in the Narkanda and Baghi area where its 'kik-kik-kik kuk-kuk-kuk' call is frequently heard as well as a variety of other metallic alarm notes and calls.

Urocissa flavirostris. The Yellow-billed Blue Magpie.

Uncommon—seen only on two occasions in the Mahasu-Kufri ridge forest.

Garrulus lanceolatus. The Black-throated Jay.

Not common—seen once near Mattiana.

Garrulus bispecularis. The Himalayan Jay.

Grating calls are fairly often heard, but this bird needs to be looked for, when it may be seen in the forests up to Baghi usually slipping from bough to bough of a tree close to the trunk.

Nucifraga caryocatactes. The Himalayan Nutcracker.

Occasionally heard and seen en route; its noisy harsh calls and mewing cries commenting on every happening within its ken are especially evident in the Narkanda, Baghi and Kadrula forests where it is very common.

Parus monticolus. The Green-backed Tit.

Fairly common and occurs at Narkanda, Baghi and Kadrula. Call;—'tea-cher'—frequently heard.

Lophophanes melanolophus. The Crested Black Tit.

Common in forests everywhere—in early June usually to be seen collecting food for young.

Lophophanes rufonuchalis. The Simla Black Tit.

Fairly common in the Baghi forests—a larger and darker edition of the Crested Black Tit.

Lophophanes dichrous. The Brown Crested Tit.

Noted only in the Narkanda-Baghi forest and at Kadrula. It appears to be uncommon.

Aegithaliscus concinnus. The Red-headed Tit.

Not particularly common but noted at Mahasu, Theog, Mattiana and Baghi in the usual cheeping little parties.

Sitta himalayensis. The White-tailed Nuthatch.

Fairly common in the forest around Mahasu—not observed elsewhere.

Garrulax albogularis. The White-throated Laughing Thrush.

Not very common. Seen on Charabra hill near Mahasu.

Trochalopteron erythrocephalum. The Red-headed Laughing Thrush.

Noted only on the Mahasu-Kufri ridge. A confirmed skulker.

Trochalopteron variegatum. The Variegated Laughing Thrush.

Common especially around Mahasu, Narkanda and Baghi. This bird also has the habit of ascending trees from bough to bough making itself evident with its loud whistle '*pitt-wee-wheel-er*'.

Trochalopteron lineatum. The Streaked Laughing Thrush.

Common. Occurs in low scrub jungle throughout the whole area—seen up to 9,500 feet. Whistles '*pit-weer*' as well as having other squeaking and murmuring notes.

Grammatoptila striata. The Striated Laughing Thrush.

Uncommon. A small party seen only on two occasions on the Mahasu-Kufri ridge. Harsh alarm note '*oick oick oick oick . . .*' and a whistling call which may be expressed '*oh see saw oh whitey—oh white*'.

Leioptila capistrata. The Black-headed Sibia.

Fairly common in forest everywhere where its loud ringing whistle '*ti-ree-ree ti-ree-ree-ree*' is frequently heard. Occurs at Baghi.

Pteruthius erythropterus. The Red-winged Shrike Babbler.

Uncommon. Seen on one or two occasions only in the Mahasu area.

Molpastes leucogenys. The White-cheeked Bulbul.

Fairly common—seen at Fagu, Theog, Mattiana, Narkanda and Baghi but not in the abundance of the Simla foothills.

Certhia himalayana. The Himalayan Tree-Creeper.

Common in forests up to 10,000 feet. Usually brings itself to notice by its thin piping note.

Luscinia brunnea. The Indian Blue Chat.

Noted at Mahasu and frequently seen and heard in undergrowth in the Baghi forests. Precedes its song of a varying number of loud notes with three or four high pitched squeaky whistles.

Saxicola torquata. The Indian Stonechat.

Common on the open hillsides from Fagu to Narkanda, usually perched on top of a bush or stone.

Rhodophila ferrea. The Dark Grey Bush-Chat.

Common throughout the whole area around cultivation and scrub—the male may often be heard singing his soft little song.

Enicurus maculatus. The Western Spotted Forktail.

A pair of these graceful birds were seen on a stream near the Mattiana dak bungalow.

Turdus albocincta. The White-collared Blackbird.

Fairly common in the Narkanda-Baghi forests. Shy.

Turdus bouboul. The Grey-winged Blackbird.

Common around Mahasu but not observed elsewhere en route.

Arceuthornis vlscivorus. The Himalayan Missel Thrush.

Fairly common in pairs in the Mahasu area, the Narkanda-Rampur road forest and around Baghi—usually seen on the ground when undisturbed. A fine songster. Is notably common at Kadralla.

Monticola rufiventris. The Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush.

Common in pairs around Mahasu and seen near Theog—the harsh scolding note and 'piping' of these birds attract attention.

Monticola cinclorhyncha. The Blue-headed Rock-Thrush.

Not very common—noted only at Baghi where it was seen and heard singing from the tree tops in the early morning and late evening.

Myophonus caeruleus. The Himalayan Whistling Thrush.

Seen and heard occasionally in nullahs containing streams—particularly around Mattiana and Baghi.

Hemichelidon sibirica. The Sooty Flycatcher.

Noted on a number of occasions around Mahasu and in the Baghi and Kadralla forests—especially on the road to Kadralla. Usually seen 'flycatching' from a fixed tree perch.

Muscicapula superciliaris. The White-eyebrowed Blue Flycatcher.

Common in woods and forests throughout the whole area where its soft trilling call note can frequently be heard. Is usually seen collecting food for young in June.

Eumyias thalassina. The Verditer Flycatcher.

Common at Mahasu but not so common elsewhere—seen near Mattiana and Theog.

Lanius schach. The Rufous-backed Shrike.

Not common. Seen on one occasion near Mattiana dak bungalow.

Pericrocotus brevirostris. The Short-billed Minivet.

Fairly common throughout the whole area. Usually seen in small parties or pairs in the tree tops, the scarlet of the males being very conspicuous.

Dicrurus macrocerus. The Black Drongo.

Not very common—seen at Mahasu, Theog and Baghi.

Dicrurus longicaudatus. The Indian Grey Drongo.

Noted only at Mahasu, Mattiana and Baghi.

Phylloscopus trochiloides. The Greenish Willow-Warbler.

A very doubtful identification—but two or three pairs which seemed to be of this species were observed near the Mattiana dak bungalow.

Phylloscopus magnirostris. The Large billed Willow-Warbler.

Noted in the wooded ravines on the side of Mount Hathu. Call note: a high pitched whistle;—'eeee, eee-eee, eee-eee.'

Phylloscopus occipitalis. The Large Crowned Willow-Warbler.

Abundant everywhere where there are trees, up to 10,000 feet, and probably higher—its whirring song being a conspicuous feature of the Simla hills in June.

Horornis pallidus. The Pale Bush-warbler.

This amusing little bird is common around Narkanda and Baghi. It spends its time creeping about the interior of thick bushes and is difficult to see but its constantly uttered thin whistle 'eu-eu-eu-eu-eu' followed by a loud and vehement 'I see you see?' or 'I see you!' cannot be mistaken.

Acridotheres tristis. The Common Mynah.

Has found its way into the hills as far as Mattiana where it is particularly common in and around the village but was not seen beyond that place.

Perissospiza icteroides. The Black & Yellow Grosbeak.

Common—especially so in the Mahasu, Narkanda, Baghi and Kadralla forests where its quick whistle 'keeky-too, keeky-too' can constantly be heard. Often seen feeding on the ground.

Pyrrhula erythrocephala The Red-headed Bullfinch.

A pair of these handsome finches were seen once in a wooded nullah on the Baghi-Kadralla road.

Hypocanthus spinoides. The Himalayan Greenfinch.

Noted only in fairly open country at Mahasu, Mattiana, Baghi and Kadralla where it was occasionally observed.

Passer domesticus. The House Sparrow.

Like the Common Mynah the House Sparrow is common in the villages as far as Mattiana, where it is annoyingly evident nesting in the dak bungalow, but does not yet seem to have found its way further into the hills.

Passer rutilans. The Cinnamon Sparrow.

Not very common—seen only at Fagu, Baghi and Mattiana in the vicinity of the villages.

Emberiza cia. The Eastern Meadow Bunting.

Common throughout the area, favouring the more open country, constantly uttering its cricket-like 'cheep' and occasionally singing a twittering little song.

Hirundo daurica. The Red-rumped Swallow.

Frequently observed en route up to Narkanda and at Kadralla but not seen at Baghi. Often rests on the ground.

Oreocorys sylvanus. The Upland Pipit.

Noted on the scree covered hillsides near Mattiana and between Fagu and Theog—has a loud creaking note 'put — eeeeeee' and 'eeeeeee — put'.

Zosterops palebrosa. The White-eye.

Noted only on one occasion at Mahasu.

Aethopyga gouldiae. Mrs. Gould's Sunbird.

This beautiful bird was seen occasionally in the Mahasu area feeding on flowering trees. Its call of 'Tzit tzit — tzit tzit — ———' draws attention to its presence.

Picus squamatus. The Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker.

Not often seen. Noted around Mahasu and in the Baghi forests.

Hypopicus hyperythrus. The Rufous-bellied Woodpecker.

This handsome little woodpecker is to be seen fairly frequently in the forest near Narkanda on the Rampur road. Observed drumming on a hollow tree trunk.

Dryobates himalayensis. The Himalayan Pied Woodpecker.

Fairly common in the Mahasu area and in the Narkanda-Baghi and Kadralla forests.

Megalaema virens. The Great Himalayan Barbet.

The mournful cry of this species; 'pee — oh' — can be heard in all the valleys en route up to Kadralla.

Cuculus canorus. The Asiatic Cuckoo.

The familiar 'Cuck-oo' call of this bird is heard everywhere and it is particularly common at Mattiana, Narkanda, Baghi and Kadralla. At these places also a loud, obviously cuckoo, call (somewhat reminiscent of the notes of the White-cheeked Bulbul) which may be expressed 'Quick, quick, drinking with you' is also very frequently heard. This was traced to a Cuckoo of the *canorus* type but whether *canorus*, *optatus*, or *poliocephalus* it was not possible to determine without procuring a specimen.

Cuculus optatus. The Himalayan Cuckoo.

Common—particularly so at Mahasu, Narkanda, Baghi and Kadralla. Its call *hoop hoop hoop hoop* is frequently evident at dawn, long after sunset and during moonlit nights.

Cuculus micropterus. The Indian Cuckoo.

Fairly common throughout the area and easily recognised by its call of *Make more pekoe*. Often calls before sunrise.

Hierococcyx sparveroides. The large Hawk-Cuckoo.

Heard at Mahasu, Narkanda, Baghi and Kadralla where it is common. Has the same ascending trill and call *Brain fever* as the Common Hawk-Cuckoo but less shrill. Also calls before sunrise and on moonlit nights.

Cacomantis merulinus. The Indian Plaintive Cuckoo.

Heard only on one occasion in the Mashobra Valley below Mahasu. Call: *how few, how few*.

Upupa epops. The Hoopoe.

Noted only at Fagu and Narkunda.

Micropus pacificus. Blyth's White-rumped Swift.

A flock of swifts identified as Blyth's Swift by the white rump and larger size than the House Swift were observed in flight below Mahasu before a storm. It is believed the Alpine Swift with its white underparts was also seen in the same locality.

Collocalia fuciphaga. The Himalayan Swiftlet.

Small flocks may occasionally be seen circling over the valleys usually preceding a storm.

Strix nivicola. The Himalayan Wood Owl.

Noted at Baghi. Call: *Hu-hoo* and *Huhu-hoo*.

Otus spilocephalus. The Himalayan Scops Owl.

The double whistle *phew.....phew* of this bird can be heard at night in the forests particularly at Mahasu and Narkanda.

Sarcogyps calvus. The King Vulture.

Not common—seen only on two occasions, once at Mahasu and once at Narkunda.

Gyps himalayensis. The Himalayan Griffon.

Common everywhere in the area.

Pseudogyps bengalensis. The White-backed Vulture.

Uncommon—seen once in flight over the Theog ridge.

Neophron percnopterus. The Neophron.

Fairly common throughout the whole area up to Baghi.

Gypaëtus barbatus. The Lämmergeier.

Fairly common everywhere—usually seen 'contouring' the hills with outstretched wings occasionally flexing, bearded head turning from side to side as every ravine and spur is examined.

Falco peregrinus. The Shahin Falcon.

A falcon in flight over the Mashobra valley below Mahasu and of which a close view was obtained was noted as a Shahin but the identification was not certain.

Falco tinnunculus. The Kestrel.

Fairly common—especially so around the steep hillsides near Narkanda and Baghi.

Ictinaëtus malayensis. The Black Eagle.

This fine bird was seen once,—skirting the edges of cliff forest and threading the trees on the side of Mount Hathu. Dark colour, fan tail and markedly upturned flight feathers are notable.

Ilaematornis cheela. The Crested Serpent-Eagle.

Seen on two or three occasions coasting with swept-back wings over the Mahasu—Kufri ridge uttering its loud whistling call.

Milvus migrans. The Common Pariah Kite.

Although common at Simla and at Mahasu the Common Kite does not seem to have moved further into the hills,—not even to Fagu—it was however observed once in flight crossing the saddle near Narkanda village.

Sphenocercus sphenurus. The Kokla Green Pigeon.

Noted in a deep forested ravine on the side of Mount Huttoo. The human-like whistle of this bird described by Whistler as *Why, we wat cheer; what are we waiting for?* immediately attracts attention.

Columba livia. The Blue Rock Pigeon.

Not common but a number seen at Mattiana and a pair at Baghi.

Streptopelia orientalis. The Rufous Turtle Dove.

Common—particularly so around Narkunda, Baghi and Kadralla. The speed at which this bird flies through the interstices of thick forest is rather astonishing.

Streptopelia risoria. The Indian Ring Dove.

Not common. Noted only at Mattiana where only one individual was seen.

Pucrasia macrolopha. The Koklas Pheasant.

Seen and heard in the Catchment Area forest near Mahasu.

Gennaecus hamiltoni. The White-crested Kalij Pheasant.

Occurs fairly commonly in the Mahasu area but not noted elsewhere en route. Pheasants were heard (but unfortunately not seen!) in the Narkunda-Hathu Baghi area but lack of familiarity with their calls precluded identification. Mr. A. E. Jones, however, states that the Monal and the Western Horned Pheasant occur on Hathu.

Arborophila torqueola. The Common Hill Partridge.

The low toned melancholy call *poo-or* of this bird is evident in the forests around Mahasu, Narkanda and Baghi.

Alectoris graeca. The Chukor.

Seen on rocky hillside between Mattiana and Theog and heard near Baghi and Kadrula. Probably also occurs on the Theog scree slopes.

Francolinus francolinus. The Black Partridge.

Noted in the valleys below Mahasu, Fagu, Theog, Mattiana and Narkanda. The grating call may be represented in the Morse code as 'TNK', i.e., '— — —' and is especially evident in rainy weather.

It may perhaps be emphasized that the foregoing record applies only to the period from the middle of May to the middle of June. The avifauna of any particular area in the hills is subject to considerable change—with seasons, of course, and with breeding periods, rainfall, food supply etc. The species observed in the area under discussion in October, for instance, will contain birds from the higher Himalayas and omit summer visitors (vide 'Some Birds Observed at Fagoo near Simla', H. Whistler, *J.B.N.H.S.*, October 20th 1919); species which are confined to a particular area whilst breeding will wander away therefrom before and after that period; a prolonged dry spell seems to be accompanied by a desertion of the hill tops and a descent to the valleys. Similarly, the ripening of crops and the flowering and fruiting of trees and bushes produce local movements. At any time of the year, however, a study of the birds of the Simla Hills is a most interesting subject.

ADDENDA

As a result of a further visit to Mahasu and Narkanda during late May and early June this year (1946) some species were observed additional to those listed in the foregoing note. Further data are also available from Waite's paper on 'Birds on the Hindustan-Tibet Road, N-W. Himalaya' *J.B.N.H.S.* Vol. 45 part 4, page 531 so far as his account refers to the Mahasu-Narkunda-Baghi area and for the months of May and June. This information is given below with an indication of still other species which may be met with, although not at all common.

(1) ADDITIONAL SPECIES NOTED IN MAY/JUNE 1946:—

Stachyridopsis pyrrhops. The Red Billed Babbler.

Not common. Heard in the Catchment area below Mahasu in May. Call, a clear evenly pitched whistle of 5 to 9 notes.

Microscelis psaroides. The Black Bulbul.

Small flocks seen in the tree tops on three or four occasions near Narkunda in early June.

Culicipapaceylonensis. The Grey Headed Flycatcher.

Uncommon. Seen in the Mahasu area at the end of May.

Seicercus burkii. The Black Browed Flycatcher Warbler.

Not common. Seen near Mahasu at the end of May in hillside forest scrub. This bird is a spring passage migrant.

Glaucidium brodiei. The Collared Pigmy Owllet.

Not previously noted but frequently seen and heard this year in the forests near Mahasu. Call, an oft-repeated four note whistle,—‘*hoot putput hoot*’, which carries a long way and is evident during the day as well as at dawn and dusk. (Waite states met with at Baghi in June.)

Clamator jacobinus. The Pied Crested Cuckoo.

Not at all common. Heard in the Mahasu area at the end of May. (Seen by Waite at Mattiana in June.)

The following species were seen this year in the Narkunda area in addition to the places previously noted:—

White Throated Laughing Thrush

Indian Blue Chat

Himalayan Greenfinch

Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker.

(2) ADDITIONAL SPECIES FROM WAITE'S PAPER:—

Sitta leucopsis leucopsis. The White-cheeked Nuthatch.

Specimen obtained between Baghi and Sungri in June.

Siva strigula strigula. The Stripe-throated Siva.

Male obtained at Baghi in June.

Oreocinclla dauma dauma. The Small-billed Mountain Thrush.

Specimen obtained on Mount Huttoo on 24th June.

Emberizafucata arcuata. The Indian Grey-headed Bunting.

Few seen between Narkunda and Mattiana in June.

Emberizastewarti The White-capped Bunting.

Seen at Baghi in June.

Cuculus poliocephalus poliocephalus. The Small Cuckoo.

Obtained in June at Baghi.

(3) ADDITIONAL SPECIES WHICH MAY BE MET WITH IN MAY & JUNE:—

The Green Shrike-Babbler.

The Fire-cap.

The Brown Hill Warbler.

Pallas' Willow-Warbler.

The Orange-gorgetted Flycatcher.

The Slaty Blue Flycatcher.

The Blue Rock-thrush.

The Brown Bullfinch.

The Himalayan Goldfinch.

The Black-naped Green Woodpecker.

The Brown-fronted Pied Woodpecker.

The Golden Eagle.

Bonelli's Eagle.

The Booted Eagle.

The Sparrow-hawk.

The Hobby Falcon.

The Monal Pheasant.

The Horned Pheasant.

The Woodcock.

The author's thanks are due to Mr. A. E. Jones who very kindly checked the list in paragraph (3).